CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Innovation Forum Updates: Update on Innovation Forum progress to date including events, work plan, civic challenge and emerging partnerships.

Sabra Schneider, Chief Information Officer, 452-4890
PJ Rodriguez, Assistant Director, 452-4205
Information Technology Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INFORMATION ONLY

Staff will give an update on the Innovation Forum work. The Innovation Forum is designed to advise city staff on advancing Bellevue's capacity as a city where innovation supports opportunity, equity, mobility, and economic development.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The Bellevue City Council Vision includes, *"Innovation is an integral part of our community. We embrace and support innovation in all aspects of our community – systems, institutions, businesses, schools and government. This innovative spirit is crucial to Bellevue's success."*

The goal of the Innovation Forum is to advise city staff on advancing Bellevue's capacity as a city where innovation supports opportunity, equity, mobility, and economic development. This topic was last before council on June 3, 2025.

Background
Staff started conversations with Council, community, and businesses in 2024 to solicit early input on how the City could further support innovation, both in delivery of city services, and in support of the innovative spirit of the community and businesses who call Bellevue home. Staff and volunteers completed 1 x 1 interviews with people representing residents, education, small business, digital equity, affordable housing, non-profit, and large businesses. Staff also conducted surveys and hosted events in City Hall for community input on priorities and work programs.

Progress To Date
The work program goals were established and endorsed at a forum event in mid-2025. Staff, businesses, non-profits, and community members have been working together to advance the short- and long-term goals that were identified. The table below reflects progress toward the established goals.

First Year Goals	Progress Notes	Status
Focus Area: Advancing Digital Equity		
Goal 1: Increase access to the internet, through grants, partnerships, and enhanced connectivity.	Stood up free Wi-Fi at Lincoln Center safe parking center, enabling residents to access the internet.	Complete
	Continuing to work with regional partners on federal grant to expand connectivity in affordable housing. Work resumes in 2026 to advance this grant.	In progress
Goal 2: Provide free or low-cost devices	Developed partnerships and hosted a device drive at the Innovation Exchange. Pilot program scheduled to launch in Q1 of this year that will distribute 60 devices, one per household, low-income limits apply. Devices will come with 1 year of hotspot connectivity.	In progress
Goal 3: Provide free, accessible tech support	Work is underway to gather regional information about places already providing technological support. Community volunteers are interested in helping at key locations. Staff are working with Mini City Hall and King County Libraries to identify areas for augmentation.	In progress
Focus Area: Prioritization and Policy		
Goal 1: Establish Innovation Policy Framework	In partnership with community volunteers, staff drafted the Innovation Resolution and Framework, which was adopted by Council in July 2025.	Complete
Goal 2: Review existing AI Policy	In consultation with community volunteers, staff reviewed and updated interim guidance on operational use of AI and the Leadership Team adopted operational policies in September of 2025.	Complete
Goal 3: Review existing Privacy Policy	Staff plan to work with community volunteers to review operational privacy policies, get input, and update them.	Not started
Focus Area: Enhance Innovation Ecosystems		
Goal 1: Support innovative partnerships and practices in city government	Partnered with Bellevue College on innovation ideas, including supporting their recent civic hackathon.	Complete/ ongoing
	Launched the Civic Innovation Challenge to partner with startups. To date, the City has offered four partnerships and those are in progress.	Complete/ ongoing
	Working with other governments, businesses, and nonprofits to expand the reach of innovation work.	Ongoing

Goal 2: Increase Participation	Participation went from 60 attendees at the first event to 273 at the Innovation Exchange in October. Work continues to expand partnerships and participation.	Complete/ ongoing
Goal 3: Create a self-sustaining innovation hub	Work is in progress to identify, fund, and develop space at Bellevue College for startups, collaboration, training and testing civic innovation.	Ongoing

Bellevue ITD also hosted three innovation events in 2025, culminating in the Innovation Exchange on October 16, a full day of learning and partnership inside Bellevue City Hall. The Innovation Exchange had 273 attendees, 48 speakers and panelists, and 13 sessions including:

- Lightning talks on AI-powered permitting, digital twins and smart civic infrastructure
- Interactive tracks on civic transformation, AI productivity and workforce innovation
- Engaging workshops on AI ethics, small business tools and creative coding
- A vibrant evening plaza experience with music, food and community and non-profit showcases

Work is also underway with the inaugural four Civic Challenge partners. Most participants are currently working toward their second major milestones with city and college partners. The inaugural participants are scheduled to complete their pilots at the end of February.

- Certivo is partnering with ITD's cybersecurity team and FAM's procurement team to pilot an AI-enhanced dashboard for vendor compliance.
- Juganu is partnering with Bellevue's Transportation Team and Bellevue College to pilot smart streetlight monitoring for lighting, curb management, and traffic safety.
- Legislaide is partnering with the City Attorney's Office to pilot the use of AI-supported ordinance look-up, policy validation, and look-up history.
- FindIT AI is partnering with Bellevue College on an AI-enabled lost and found tool. This special youth partnership was awarded to a high school student.

Upcoming 2026 Innovation Work
The innovation team will continue to advance the long- and short-term workplan established in mid-2025. Specific areas of focus in 2026 include the following:

1. The City of Bellevue and Bellevue College are partnering to build a non-profit civic innovation ecosystem that positions the region as the place innovators do business, showcases success in responsible AI advancement, supports digital equity and drives inclusive civic innovation. Bellevue actively seeks additional founding partners to support and enhance this mission.

2. Launching a second Innovation Challenge to partner with start-ups, community members, and students to enhance innovation in city services.

3. Continuing to enhance partnerships with the private sector and non-profits to expand digital equity initiatives.

4. Establish physical space in Bellevue to support innovative collaboration, pilots, start-ups, and small businesses. Create outdoor space that supports testing smart infrastructure in streamlined ways.

5. Expand AI education opportunities for government employees and the public to ensure everyone can take advantage of new opportunities.

6. Continue to host innovation events that support learning, networking, digital equity, and partnerships.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impacts

From the Comprehensive Plan, this work aligns to:

ED-5. Foster business innovation through business development strategies and promoting digital infrastructure.

UT-4. Encourage public-private partnerships to take advantage of the city's fiber optic network to facilitate innovation, service delivery and competition for broadband deployment throughout the city

Fiscal Impact

The 2025-2026 budget includes a CIP for innovation across the City. This funding will be used to support the forum and the priorities identified by the community, including innovative ways of delivering city services.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A